Blackboard Collaborate - Student User Guide

This brief guide will help you get started using the Blackboard Collaborate software package .

What is Blackboard Collaborate?

Blackboard Collaborate is an online virtual classroom/meeting space which allows users to connect via audio, see each other via webcams, use a chat tool, collaborate on documents and view presentations, as well as other features.

Kit Required

To make use of Blackboard Collaborate you need to have the following items:

- **Working PC (or Mac) with internet connection** – The faster your web connection the better Blackboard Collaborate will work, although a regular broadband connection should prove ample.
- **Java installed on the computer** – Java may be downloaded from http://www.java.com/en/download/.
- **Headphones** – The best type to use and the headphones with built in microphone, such as you might use if you worked in a call centre (see right). This significantly cuts out audio feedback.
- **Webcam** – If you wish to allow other users in the room to see you. This is not essential, but may be useful.

Preparation

Prior to using Blackboard Collaborate please check the following things:

- **Peripherals** – Make sure you plug any peripherals such as headphones, microphone and webcam into your computer before starting the Blackboard Collaborate session.
- **Java** – Ensure you have the latest version of Java installed and running on your computer.
- **Check System Requirements** – Use this page on the Blackboard Collaborate web site to check if your system meets the requirements for using Blackboard Collaborate: http://support.blackboardcollaborate.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=8336&task=knowledge&questionID=1473

Entering the Room

You tutor should send you an email containing a link inviting you to the Blackboard Collaborate session. This is generated automatically when the session is scheduled. Please hang onto the email as you will need the link in it to enter the session on the given day. You may be able to enter the online room slightly before the session start time, please ask your tutor about this.

Audio Setup

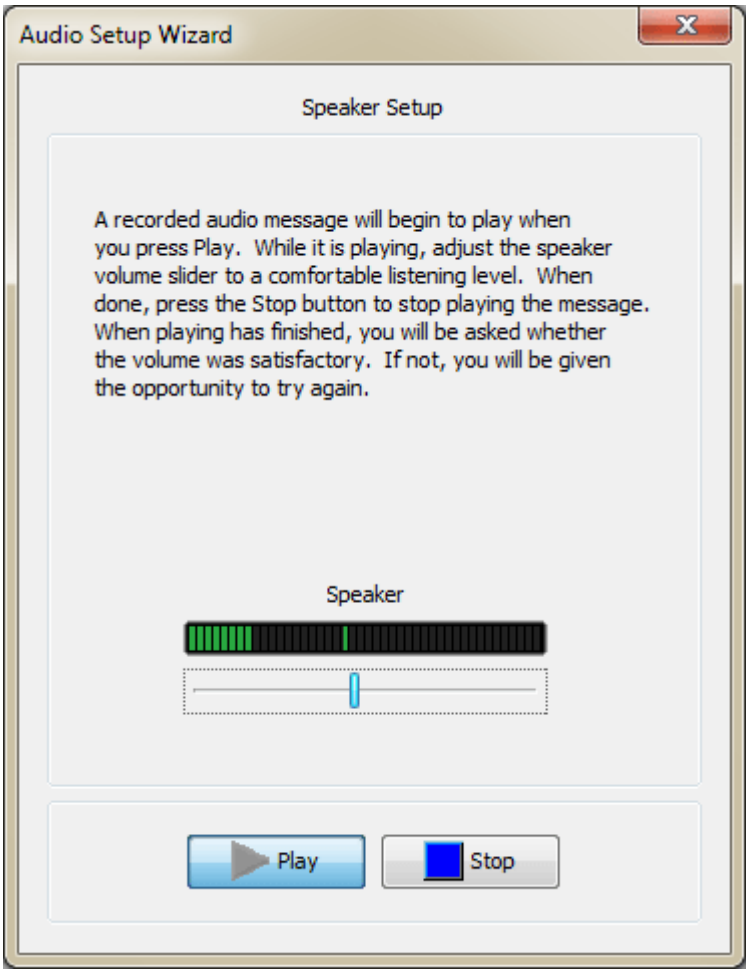
Run the Audio Wizard when you first join the room to make sure the volume levels are set correctly.

The Audio Wizard is available in Blackboard Collaborate via **> Tools > Audio > Audio Setup Wizard**.

The wizard first asks you to listen to some speech and adjust the volume so you can hear this clearly.

Then the wizard asks you to record some speech of your own, which it then plays back to you to confirm the correct sound input level (see right).

You will have to work through the Audio Setup Wizard each time you attend a Blackboard Collaborate session, but it only takes a minute to do.


Audio Setup Wizard
Speaker Setup
A recorded audio message will begin to play when you press Play. While it is playing, adjust the speaker volume slider to a comfortable listening level. When done, press the Stop button to stop playing the message. When playing has finished, you will be asked whether the volume was satisfactory. If not, you will be given the opportunity to try again.
Speaker
Play
Stop

Speaking

Click the **Talk** button before speaking to make your microphone active. A microphone icon appears beside your name in the list of participants in the room, as shown (right).

Click the **Talk** button again to turn off your microphone when not speaking.

Use the sliders above the **Talk** and **Video** buttons to adjust the input and output sound levels.

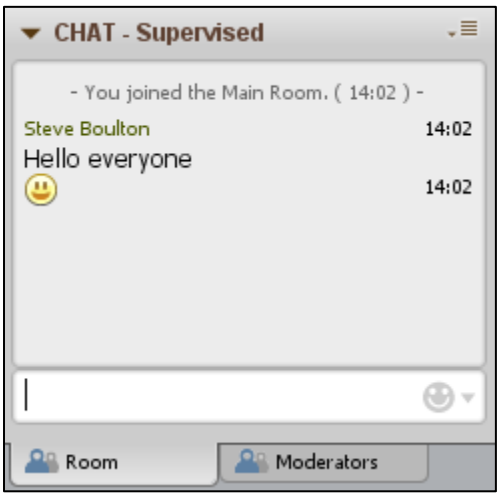
Click the button again to turn your microphone off when not speaking.

Moderators may disable the functionality of other users' microphones.

Chatting

Use the chat tool to communicate via real time chat. Type your chat into the text box and press **Enter** on the keyboard or click **Send** to add it to the chat in the room.

Click the arrow alongside the smiley face (bottom right) to reveal a selection of emoticon icons which you can select to add to the chat. The relevant text shorthand for the icon is added to the text box and then, when you press **Enter**, the icon appears in the chat. A smiley face example is shown (right).



Webcam

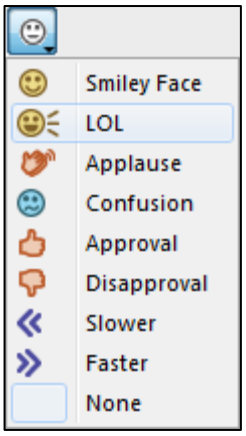
You can use a webcam to transmit a picture of yourself to other users in the room. This is optional. Using Blackboard Collaborate without a webcam frees up bandwidth for other operations, but using one adds a human element to online discussion. Moderators may disable all web cams. Connect your webcam before entering the room and then click the **Video** button beneath the webcam display to start broadcasting your image to other users in the room.

Click the right hand half of the **Video** button to Preview your image before broadcasting, and the left hand half of the button to broadcast when you are happy.

The webcam on the Video button shows in red when transmitting. Click the **Video** button again to disable transmission of your image.

Emoticons

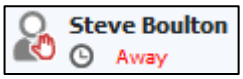
Use emoticons to express opinions on things being discussed. The emoticon option in the Participants List reveals a pull down menu of contributions.



Select the required response to indicate your feelings. The selected emoticon displays beside your name for 5 seconds, as shown (right).

Leaving the Room temporarily

If you need to stop paying attention to the online session temporarily, for example to answer the phone, you may click the **Away** button in the Participants List. The word Away appears below your name. Click the button again when you return to the room to let others know you are back.



Raise Your Hand

Use the **Raise hand** icon to indicate a desire to contribute. A number will appear alongside your name in the Participants List, showing the order in which you put your hand. This helps the tutor manage the room and allow people to contribute in turn.

Voting

Use the voting icons to vote on questions proposed during the session. Vote choices are shown alongside the participants in the Participants List, as shown (right).

Whiteboard

The Whiteboard is the main area of the screen in Blackboard Collaborate on which presentations may be shared and annotated. Click the **Whiteboard icon** (shown above) to access the Whiteboard if not already shown. You tutor will likely load a presentation into this working area and deliver a presentation or lecture with accompanying slides, moving through the slides as the presentation progresses.

A series of options are available to interact with the items on the Whiteboard. These include a series of pens, shapes and text boxes, all available in a floating toolbar (shown right). This toolbar may be moved on screen by clicking and dragging it by the bar along its top.

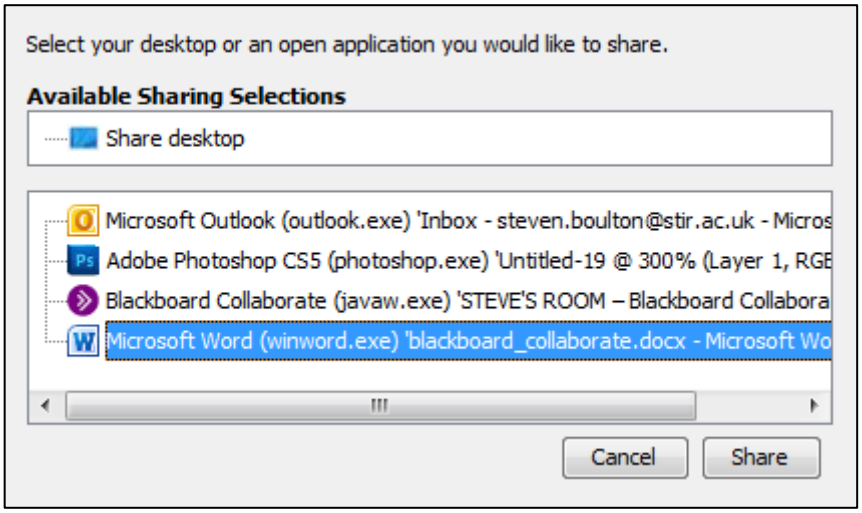
Options available to annotate the Whiteboard include text boxes, shapes and pen strokes. Pictures and screen shots may also be imported onto the Whiteboard. Click the option on the toolbar, then annotate the screen as required.

The Moderator may disable all these options.

Application Sharing

Users may share any applications open on their machine with others in the virtual room, who may contribute to them. The user initially sharing the application passes control of the application to other users in turn. This is useful for collaborating on documents and presentations. Click the **Application Sharing** icon (shown right).

This opens a dialogue box showing all applications running on the computer (shown right). Select the one to be shared and click **Share** to share this application with other users.


Select your desktop or an open application you would like to share.
Available Sharing Selections
Share desktop
Microsoft Outlook (outlook.exe) 'Inbox - steven.boulton@stir.ac.uk - Micros
Adobe Photoshop CS5 (photoshop.exe) 'Untitled-19 @ 300% (Layer 1, RGB
Blackboard Collaborate (javaw.exe) 'STEVE'S ROOM – Blackboard Collabora
Microsoft Word (winword.exe) 'blackboard_collaborate.docx - Microsoft Wo
Cancel
Share

Control of the shared application may be passed to others by the Moderator.

Moderators are also in control of whether to allow other users to start application sharing sessions.

Web Tour

Moderators may host a web tour to demonstrate a web site. This appears in the same place on screen as the Whiteboard to other users. Moderators navigate through the site and other users follow automatically, allowing demonstration of a web site. Moderators can free up control of the tour to allow users to go off and explore the site.